

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Interagency Council on Homelessness



Notes from the Meeting of the Interagency Council of Homelessness (ICH)

Date and Time: May 11, 2010 2:00pm to 3:30pm
Location: Central Union Mission 1350 R Street, NW Washington, DC
Approximate Attendance: 96

Welcome and Introductions

Clarence Carter, DHS Director, called the meeting to order and then opened the meeting for comments from the public.

Public Comment Period

- A meeting attendee voiced his pleasure with the fact that the 2011 budget for the Department of Health included an increased amount for substance abuse programs.
- A speaker that currently resides in the Harriet Tubman Shelter voiced her concern regarding drug and alcohol abuse in the shelter. She recommended that a monitoring system is implemented to cut down on the drug use at the Harriet Tubman Shelter. Director Carter informed the speaker to bring any specific instances of drug or alcohol abuse to Catholic Charities so that an investigation can take place.
- A meeting attendee voiced her concern regarding the disorganization of the way that the District handles substance abuse clients; she feels that the current system is ineffective.

Summary of the Discussion from the Pre-Meeting Focus Groups-Schroeder Stribling, Deputy Executive Director, N Street Village

- A focus group (round table) was held prior to the ICH meeting so that key issues could be discussed in detail by members of the homeless community with the findings or conclusions of the discussions presented at the subsequent ICH meeting. This input is sought in order to inform the planning process of the ICH and its committees. More than 30 individuals participated in this session.
- Participants were asked to reflect on specific questions or topics and to offer their input and perspectives through both small group conversations and in written comments. These questions were discussed:

Topic: Homeless Resource Center Environment

The Strategic Action Plan to End Homelessness proposes to redesign the basic systems of care for both families and individuals; in order to accomplish this, resource centers will be utilized. The resource centers are intended to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by making linkages to relevant services and housing supports. One resource center will focus on families (adults accompanied by a minor child) and one will be available for individuals experiencing homelessness. The resource centers will be equipped to make linkages to programs that are targeted for specific populations such as those serving youth, seniors, veterans, couples, victims of domestic violence, those re-entering the community from corrections facilities or transitioning out of medical institutions.

1. What are the most important elements of the physical environment of the resource centers?

- Accessibility to public transportation
- Warm, welcoming environment
- Clean, bright environment
- ADA compliant facility
- Basic emergency supplies for families – food, diapers, etc.
- Access to computers and internet
- Functioning water fountains/toilets
- Television(s)
- Emergency Showers
- Play area for children
- Private intake areas
- Emergency rooms
- Trained, considerate staff members
- Storage areas

2. What services and activities should be available at these resource centers?

- Child Care services
- Ongoing trainings and workshops
- Resource Library
- Computers
- Mental Health services
- Outreach
- Drug counseling
- Representation from each District agency
- Legal Services
- Supplies to meet immediate needs like food and diapers
- Self-help resources like computer terminals
- Staff trained to provide a welcoming environment
- Peer Mentoring
- Housing Services
- Case Management
- Employment

Topic: Summer Planning and Hyperthermia

In compliance with the Homeless Services Reform Act of 2005 (HSRA), the District develops a Summer Hyperthermia Plan to describe how member agencies and their partners will coordinate to provide services for those who are homeless during instances of extreme weather. These services include street showers, cooling centers and emergency homeless facilities.

1. What are the most important issues to consider regarding the summer season in terms of maintaining safety and well being for persons experiencing homelessness?

- Transportation to cooling centers
- Portable Showers
- Bottled water for hydration
- Ensure that shelters are addressing facility and maintenance issues
- Clear, concise system-wide plan
- Water stations that are evenly spread throughout the city
- Street outreach
- A hyperthermia media campaign is needed to educate the public about the risk and resources
- Partnership with area businesses/ churches to provides services
- Adequate police/security presence
- Emergency food/clothing
- Fliers or cards with maps to water and cooling center locations

ICH Committee Reports

Steering Committee-Scott McNeilly, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless (WLCH)

- Scott McNeilly informed ICH members that the Steering Committee is attempting to align the agenda items for both the pre-meeting forum and the ICH meeting to topics that are timely at various points during the year that the meetings actually occur.
- By the time that the next ICH meeting occurs, the Steering Committee will be in the middle of the implementation plan of the Strategic Plan to End Homelessness and is planning to reach out to various jurisdictions to come in and share their experiences implementing innovative strategies around the country.

Operations and Logistics Committee- Chapman Todd, Catholic Charities

- Since the last ICH meeting, the Operations and Logistics Committee held a debriefing of the 2009-2010 Hypothermia season. A number of comments were received about what worked, as well as what can be done to improve the plan.

*Notes from the Hypothermia Debriefing session are available on the ICH website:
www.ich.dc.gov

Shelter Capacity Subcommittee-Michael Ferrell, Coalition for the Homeless

- The Shelter Capacity subcommittee met on April 22nd to continue the efforts to monitor the usage of shelter both during and after hypothermia season. The subcommittee is currently paying close attention to the number of people that are turned away from existing emergency shelters.
- The group also continues its efforts to review the expansion of resource directories that can be useful for both providers and residents that are served.

Strategic Planning Committee- Kelly Sweeney-McShane, Community of Hope

- The Strategic Planning Committee is currently looking at implementation aspects of the Strategic Plan, as well as looking into strategies for youth and next steps.
- A briefing for potential funders will be held in early June, this briefing will highlight the Strategic Action Plan to End Homelessness to various funders in order to utilize their resources and skill to the implementation process moving forward.

Overview of Summer Hyperthermia Plan

- Robin Johnson from HSEMA gave an update regarding the 2010 Summer Hypothermia Plan, a few major focus points are listed below:
 - The Street Showers program may not be offered this year; however the group is currently looking into possible alternatives.
 - The 2010 Summer Plan will be updated and ready to distribute to the public by June 1.
 - A copy of the Hyperthermia plan is available on the DHS website at www.dhs.dc.gov

DHS Updates

- Fred Swan from DHS updated the ICH on the following items:
 - Effective April 30, 2010 Families Forward is no longer operating the DC General facility, The Community Partnership will take over on site operations and management of the DC General and Park Road facilities; a new contractor should be in place by October 1 2010.
 - DHS is preparing a number of Request for Proposals (RFP) in preparation for the System Redesign, the following RFPs are being formed:
 - Homeless Services Management
 - Outreach Services
 - Hotline Transportation Services

- Virginia Williams Resource Center
- DC General Shelter Operations
- Case Management
- Resource Center for Individuals

2010 Point in Time Recap

- Sue Marshall of The Community Partnership provided a overview of the 2010 Point in Time survey, this presentation is available on the ICH website at: www.ich.dc.gov

Back on My Feet (BOMF) Program Presentation

- The Back on My Feet program is a nonprofit organization that partners with shelter, transitional housing facilities and rehabilitation centers to provide running programs to engage residents in sport within a positive team environment to help rebuild self esteem and self confidence. In addition, the BOMF program assists with connections to job training and reeducation programs.
- The program was launched in the District on March 27, 2010, and is currently working with running groups from 4 shelters.
- If you want to learn more about the program, please visit the BOMF website at www.backonmyfeet.org

Public Comment Period

- A meeting attendee voiced his pleasure with the outreach efforts of the People's for Fairness Coalition, and he hopes that the partnership between DHS and the Peoples for Fairness Coalition continues to strengthen.
- A female attendee spoke to the group regarding her concerns with the lack of job training programs that are available to middle aged homeless persons in the District.